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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (May 19-June 2, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

¶2. (U) Vincent Otti, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) second-in-command re-stated the rebel group's demand that the International Criminal Court (ICC) lift the warrants for the arrest of its top leaders before any disarmament and demobilization occurs. Otti made the remarks during a visit by Sky TV reporters, who spent three days with the LRA leadership at Garamba National Park. The footage aired on May 25. Otti stated that "we cannot go back to Uganda without lifting these indictments." Otti claimed that the GOU had the power to get the indictments dropped. He threatened that the LRA "has enough to capture power. We were seven, now we are thousands. Everybody in Uganda wants change, but they cannot do anything without the barrel of a gun." Otti also said that the LRA "can fight" if the indictments were not lifted.

¶3. (U) On May 27, President Museveni condemned Otti's remarks as an assault on the peace process. On May 30, government negotiators said that remarks made by LRA's second-in-command, Vincent Otti, would not deter the GOU from achieving its goals at the negotiations. The GOU stated that its objectives were reaching an agreement that will bring lasting peace to Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan; ensuring that there is no impunity and there is justice for the victims; satisfying the traditional norms of the affected communities; and ensuring that the legitimate concerns and respect for international laws, including the ICC are adequately addressed.

¶5. (U) The peace talks resumed on May 31. A workshop on accountability issues kicked off the meetings. Acholi traditional leader, Rwot Acana, presented a paper on traditional reconciliation and accountability mechanisms.

¶6. (U) USG Activities: Political/Economic Chief attended a briefing by the Government of Uganda negotiating team on May 30.

¶7. (SBU) Cynthia Brady, Conflict Specialist in USAID's Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management, visited Uganda from May 9-30 to help the Mission design a new, community-based peace and

reconciliation activity for the conflict-affected areas of northern Uganda. Within the framework of the Government of Uganda's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda and based on lessons learned from evaluations of the Northern Uganda Peace Initiative and the Community Resilience and Dialogue activity, the new program includes components for (1) peace-building and reconciliation, (2) economic security and social inclusion, and (3) access to justice. A solicitation is planned for later this summer.

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SECURITY UPDATE
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¶8. (SBU) According to U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Juba, the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team (CHMT) was working out proposed assembly routes after the LRA rejected the Ugandan Peoples' Defense Forces (UPDF) and Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) proposed routes announced on May 8. The CHMT announced the routes and reported that various LRA groups have crossed the Nile and were moving to Garamba National Park.

¶9. (SBU) On May 19, a group of 75 alleged LRA attacked villages north of Laihya, Central Equatoria State, Southern Sudan, which is 25 miles west of Juba. One of the homes looted belonged to the Southern Sudanese Minister of Information, Samson Kwaje, who is also a member of the mediating team. On May 22, the LRA attacked the village of Fore, 80 miles west of Juba. Two SPLA soldiers were killed during an LRA attack on May 23 near the same village. The LRA group with commander Thomas Kwoyello was believed to be responsible for these attacks. Reportedly, Kwoyello's group subsequently sustained serious losses at the hands of a southern

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Sudanese militia group.

¶10. (U) In LRA-affected northern Uganda, the general security situation remained calm in Lango, Teso and Acholi regions. In Kaabong, Karamoja, a WFP truck was attacked and one staff person killed, reportedly by Karamojong. WFP temporarily suspended operations. Otuke county, Lira District and portions of eastern Pader District continue to be affected by Karamajong attacks.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶11. (U) In Lira District, there was a fairly high degree of movement from Abia, Aliwang and Adwari where there are now less than 1,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the three camps. Many IDPs were maintaining some minimal contact with their huts in the camp although they do not stay there permanently. For example, 80 percent of the huts in these three camps were locked with no sign of residents around, but clearly not abandoned. Over the past month there has been increased movement of IDPs originating from Pader District moving from southern Lira into camps in northern Lira (closer to Pader). IDPs in these did not report land access as a problem. More than 80 percent of the IDPS still living in the camps are accessing their original land for cultivation.

¶12. (U) In Acholi districts, there were no significant changes in the pattern of movement. The majority of IDPs moving out of the camps were settling in new sites. Approximately 50,000 IDPs moved to transit sites in April, increasing the number of IDPs in transit from 271,000 to 321,000. There was some evidence that the number of IDPs moving back to their homes is increasing from approximately 1 percent in March to roughly 5 percent in May. (Complete numbers for May are not yet available.) Similar to the situation in Lango, approximately 80 percent of the population was accessing land for cultivation. Land under cultivation also continues to increase. In Gulu and Amuru districts the amount of land under cultivation per household was up from 3 acres in June 2006 to 4.4 acres in May 2007.

¶13. (U) IDPs continue to cite lack of safe water sources, lack of

grass for thatching (next season for dry grass is October), fear to return before peace agreement is signed, lack of farm implements and tools, and fear of unexploded ordnance at return sites as factors hindering returns.

¶14. (SBU) Coordination and U.N. cluster management issues continue. Overwhelmed by its cluster coordination responsibilities, UNICEF tried to pass responsibility for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to U.N. Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) with two weeks notice. UNFPA is barely operational. UNFPA might be a good place for GBV to be covered in the long run, but currently, UNFPA does not have the capacity to take a leadership role. UNICEF agreed to continue in its coordination role until a better solution was found. The other alternative is UNHCR, but it has its hands full, and has only just begun addressing camp management in an organized manner.

¶15. (SBU) UNHCR began rolling out the new camp management guidelines in northern Uganda. Emphasis is being placed on using the camp management coordination structure to begin planning for camp closure. This should help facilitate the shift away from camp leadership to the Local Councilor (LC) system. Currently, these two tracks run in parallel. Only Lango has a clear process for degazetting camps, but over the past week Pader District officials began drafting procedures for camp closure. UNHCR plans to extend the process underway in Pader to other districts in Acholiland.

¶16. (SBU) Land continues to be a key protection issue. While land disputes were not inhibiting IDP returns, there is no functioning legal structure to handle disputes. Without legal guidelines or remedies, the potential for the further marginalization of vulnerable groups, such as female-headed households and child mothers continues to exist. Districts are exploring ways to tackle this matter, but often vulnerable groups are not included in the discussion.

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IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB
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¶17. (U) The May 25 Daily Monitor published an "Open Letter to the LRA" by Olara Otuunu, former U.N. Undersecretary for Children and Armed Conflict and Acholi critic of the GOU. Otuunu accuses the LRA

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and President Museveni of a smear campaign to intimidate him. The accusation followed press reports in late April which quoted LRA negotiator David Nyekorach Matsanga as saying that the rebels had requested the removal of the LRA from the list of international terrorist organizations, so that Otuunu and others could participate in the peace process without being labeled as terrorists. Otuunu denies ever being a member or supporter of the LRA. He does claim a "long standing relationship (covert and overt) between the Museveni regime and the LRA leadership." He also calls for the immediate dismantling of all "concentration" camps in the North.

¶18. (U) The Daily Monitor published an editorial on May 30 that was strongly supportive of President Museveni's sharp reaction to Vincent Otti's comments on Sky TV that the LRA would resume war if the ICC indictments were not dropped. Under the headline "President Museveni Right About the LRA," the Monitor called the LRA position "exasperating." The paper noted that "All people of goodwill have against their moral conscience chosen peace and sacrificed justice in the name of ending ... the conflict." It added that "If the rebels do not see the wisdom in the Juba process, then as the President correctly puts it, they will surely perish."

¶19. (U) The Uganda Conflict Action Network posted a statement to its website announcing that the new U.S.-based Resolve Uganda NGO is committed to "pressuring U.S. political officials" to engage more publicly and "advocating for increased international engagement and renewed investment in the ongoing peace process." The statement quotes Resolve Uganda Executive Director Michael Poffenberger: "Resolve Uganda is working with members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to press President Bush to send a senior-level diplomat to Juba. "By sending a senior diplomat to Juba, the U.S. could bring much-needed attention to the talks, and be available to

help at the discretion of the mediator. We are not at all advocating for a U.S. takeover of the negotiations, but think that the U.S. should be doing more to see that the African leadership has all the resources and respect it needs to bring the parties to an agreement."

¶20. (U) Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial Board writer Carolyn Davis will be coming to Uganda on June 5, accompanying a 16-year-old northern Ugandan burn victim who received treatment in the U.S. (the LRA set fire to her family's home while she was in it). The Inquirer plans to do a series of articles and website posts about Jennifer Anyayo's journey home to Uganda, and Davis will be "blogging" about it.

CHRITTON